

DRAFT LETTER TO THE CLARION-LEDGER

Ms. Bender's tirade against me smacks of sensationalism ("After trial, Bender challenges Barbour," The Clarion-Ledger, July 17, 2005). Frankly, I regret that she shows so little knowledge of present-day Mississippi, and also regret that The Clarion-Ledger's editors let so much erroneous material – even under the banner of opinion - make it into what was presented as an "open letter" to me. The editors apparently gave her a free ride that was also free from any semblance of fact-checking. Clearly, given the realities of age, I have no connection whatsoever with the Sovereignty Commission and, today, as Governor, I would never allow such an organization to exist. While Ms. Bender may not like it, Mississippi voters chose to keep their state flag, and the election took place before I became Governor. While Ms. Bender may not like it, I wear a lapel pin that honors the courage and heroism displayed by members of the Mississippi National Guard – the pin carries depictions of the U.S. and Mississippi flags, not the Confederate flag as she asserted.

I can empathize with Ms. Bender's personal loss. As a husband and human being, I am sorry for her personal loss more than 40 years ago. But, then, even she has moved on and carved out a new life for herself in Seattle,

Wash. A better message for her to deliver to The Clarion-Ledger's readers is that they, too, should move beyond the 1960s by working energetically every day to improve the quality of life in Mississippi – economically, culturally, racially and through every other means available. To her, we can never change the past. But, for our own children, we can change the future.